CONFERENCE ON DISARMAMENT

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ENGLISH

FINAL RECORD OF THE SEVEN HUNDRED AND FORTY-EIGHTH PLENARY MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Thursday, 29 August 1996 at 10 a.m.

President: Mr. Dembinski (Poland)

GE.96-63700 (E)

The PRESIDENT: I declare open the 748th plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament.

I have on my list of speakers for today the representatives of India, Iraq and Belarus and the Chairman of the Ad Hoc Group of Scientific Experts to Consider International Cooperative Measures to Detect and Identify Seismic Events. I now give the floor to the representative of India, Ambassador Ghose.

Ms. GHOSE (India): I take the floor today to make a short statement to place on record our views on an issue which, in a sense, arises from our consideration of the draft report of the CD to the General Assembly and also relates to our consideration of the CD's future work programme.

Just before you closed the plenary session last week, Mr. President, we witnessed an extraordinary development - one that may have consequences for our future work. Some days before, this plenary had adopted, by consensus, the report of the Ad Hoc Committee on a Nuclear Test Ban, a report which included a conclusion and recommendation which read:

> "As this report indicates, despite the assessments of CD/NTB/WP.330/Rev.2 contained in section VI above and support for a proposal to transmit it to the Conference on Disarmament for its consideration, no consensus could be reached either on the text or on the action proposed. The Ad Hoc Committee refers this report to the Conference on Disarmament."

It will be recalled that this report and its conclusion and recommendation had been also adopted by consensus in the Committee after several painful hours of discussions. I might point out that India had not asked for a report, but had not objected to one.

Yet last week we found the CD's own decision flouted in the CD plenary itself, when a delegation announced that it was adopting the text we had agreed not to transmit, and requested that it be circulated as an official document of the CD. That text was the product of the work of several delegations, including mine, even though we had been unable to reach consensus on it. For any delegation to adopt it is its sovereign right, but to undermine a consensus decision not to transmit it to the CD by asking for it to be circulated as an official document? This calls into question the validity of decision-making in this forum. Any delegation can ask for the circulation of any paper as its national position - a week-old newspaper, a fairy story - but a text which the Ad Hoc Committee had specifically agreed not to bring to the CD? We are aware, by later developments outside this forum, why this procedure, risky to the CD though it was, was utilized. I shall not comment on that, as that action has nothing, in our view, to do with the CD.

(Mr. Ghose, India)

Therefore, Mr. President, under instructions of my Government, I sent you a letter to be circulated as an official document. In this case, the document is of truly Indian origin. I would like to read the text of this letter into the record:

> "I have seen document CD/1427 dated August 22, 1996 circulated by the Secretariat.
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> "I note that this document transmits a text on which no consensus had been achieved in the Ad Hoc Committee on a Nuclear Test Ban. It had also been agreed in the Ad Hoc Committee that there was no consensus on transmitting this particular text to the Conference on Disarmament. The submission of this document to the Conference and its circulation as an official document of the Conference on Disarmament through a procedural manoeuvre cannot in any way confer this text with an enhanced status or bypass the decisions already taken by the Ad Hoc Committee and endorsed by the CD, regarding the non-consensual nature of this text."

The CD is only a forum - but one whose credibility and integrity rest on the good faith in which willing partners agree to negotiate and even to disagree, but chiefly to accept the outcome agreed to finally. India still believes in the CD as the sole multilateral forum for disarmament negotiations. But we cannot but state, with regret, that the developments I have referred to are bound to affect future negotiations. As we consider our future agenda of work, this will, I wish to assure you, be among the issues uppermost in our minds.

Mr. AL-TIKRITI (Iraq) (translated from Arabic): Since this is the first time for my delegation to take the floor before this session of the Conference on Disarmament, allow me, Sir, to express to you our congratulations and our best wishes on your assumption of the presidency. I would like at the same time to pay tribute to your predecessor, Ambassador Urrutia of Peru, who very skilfully guided the work of this Conference during his term of office as President of the Conference at a very critical and difficult stage of its work. On this occasion, I would also like to extend congratulations to Ambassador Jaap Ramaker, the Chairman of the Ad Hoc Committee on NTB, who made strenuous and diligent efforts in order to submit to us the text for the draft CTBT.

I have asked for the floor today in order to express the viewpoint of the delegation of Iraq on some of the main issues before the Conference on Disarmament. My delegation firmly believes that comprehensive nuclear disarmament is an important element in supporting international security, improving international relations and building and bolstering confidence among States. In this respect, we would like to emphasize that negotiations on any document should serve international, national and regional objectives. The strength of any document under negotiation would depend on the acceptance of this document by everybody and recognition that all States find in the same

(Mr. Al-Tikriti, Iraq)

document the same interests. Therefore negotiations are multilateral in general and normally very complex and difficult and it is not always easy to reach consensus in this respect in order to respond to the aspirations and the interests of everybody.

On this basis Iraq had hoped that this strenuous negotiating process on the draft CTBT, which has been the concern of the Conference for over three years, would culminate in a text that would be accepted by consensus so that the Conference could meet the aspirations and expectations of the international community from this distinguished Conference. It is truly regrettable that the text that has been submitted by the Chairman of the Ad Hoc Committee for the NTB, Ambassador Jaap Ramaker, which is contained in document CD/NTB/WP.330/Rev.2, has not met with consensus. This has placed the Conference on Disarmament in an extremely difficult situation that could affect its credibility in its capacity as the sole negotiating forum in the field of disarmament. My delegation, like other delegations, expressed its opinion and was sincerely hoping that, after this long and strenuous effort, we would obtain a text that would meet the aspirations of the international community, reassure States and constitute a document which would ban all nuclear tests and other explosions. That would have been a serious and tangible step towards comprehensive nuclear disarmament. However, the current state of affairs offers proof that some have not allowed the achievement of this beneficial aim that we sought through the drafting of this historic document. The aim of the international community has been, and still is, complete nuclear disarmament and the total destruction of weapons worldwide so that coming generations can live in a terror-free and secure world. Therefore, like other delegations, we had hoped that the text of the proposed CTBT would meet that aspiration. Despite our numerous observations on the text contained in document 330/Rev.2, we believe that it represents the minimum that could be achieved in multilateral negotiations in view of the aforementioned interests, orientations and aims. Therefore, the position of Iraq is that there is a need to reach a consensus. We are confident that the skill and wide experience of the member delegations of this Conference will enable the Conference to overcome the difficulties that it is facing at this critical stage of its history.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the representative of Iraq for his statement and for the kind words addressed to the Chair. I now give the floor to the representative of Belarus, Ambassador Agurtsou.

Mr. AGURTSOU (Belarus) (translated from Russian): Mr. President, first of all I would like to congratulate you warmly on taking up the post of President of the Conference on Disarmament at this important stage in the CD's work. Our delegation is convinced that the Conference will find your experience and your recognized skill as a diplomat most beneficial. I would also like to take this opportunity to express gratitude and homage to your predecessor, Ambassador Urrutia of Peru, and also to the Chairman of the Ad Hoc Committee on a Nuclear Test Ban, Ambassador Ramaker.

(Mr. Aqurtsou, Belarus)

I would like to emphasize that the Republic of Belarus supports the draft GBT in the form in which it appears in document CD/NTB/WP.330/Rev.2, and regrets that the Conference on Disarmament was unable to approve this text and forward it to the United Nations General Assembly.

Mr. President, I have taken the floor in this plenary meeting to bring to your attention an initiative taken by the Government of the Republic of Belarus with regard to the creation of a nuclear-free area in Central and Eastern Europe. As you are aware, this idea has been put forward more than once in recent decades. However, only the events of the last few years, as well as the historic steps towards the building of a world without nuclear weapons, have created the real preconditions for putting this idea into practice. With the imminent withdrawal of the last nuclear missile from the territory of Belarus and at the same time from the whole central part of the European continent, from the Baltic Sea to the Black Sea, this region will for the first time in four decades be truly free of nuclear weapons. Today history gives us an opportunity to consolidate this situation by creating an international basis for maintaining a nuclear-free regime in Central and Eastern Europe. We understand that today the States of Central and Eastern Europe are at a decisive stage in their development. Heated discussion is going on as to the possible future model of a pan-European system of security and cooperation. We have no intention of influencing our European neighbours in making a free and responsible choice of the most appropriate formula to govern relationships with foreign partners in the field of political and military security that corresponds to their national interests. At the same time we think that, regardless of the specific approach to this problem adopted by the leaders and people of individual countries, the stable consolidation of non-nuclear principles in the region will only contribute to the establishment in that part of Europe of a climate of confidence, mutual respect and partnership.

The essence of our proposals is as follows: the States of the region of Central and Eastern Europe should begin consultations with neighbouring and interested countries, and also within OSCE, NATO and the EC, to discuss the geography of a nuclear-free area, its parameters and principles, and possible legal frameworks for it. On the basis of these consultations, interested countries could then proceed to concrete talks with the aim of creating a nuclear-free zone in Central and Eastern Europe.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the distinguished Ambassador of Belarus for his statement and the kind words addressed to the Chair. I now give the floor to the Chairman of the Ad Hoc Group of Scientific Experts to Consider International Cooperative Measures to Detect and Identify Seismic Events, Dr. Ola Dahlman, who will introduce the Group's progress report on its forty-fifth session, held between 5 and 15 August 1996, which is contained in document CD/1422.

Mr. DAHLMAN (Sweden): I am pleased to report to you on the recent session of the Ad Hoc Group, held from 5 to 15 August and attended by experts and representatives from 32 States, and to introduce documents CD/1422 and CD/1423. CD/1422 is the progress report from the session, which is available

(Mr. Dahlman, Sweden)

to you; CD/1423 will soon be available and is a comprehensive report on the GSETT-3 experiment and its relevance to the seismic component of the international monitoring system. The executive summary of that comprehensive report is annexed to the progress report and available to you today.

The main topic of the session was to prepare the comprehensive report contained in CD/1423, which provides an overview of the results and conclusions from one and a half years of full-scale GSETT-3 operation. The report also contains a number of recommendations that might facilitate a smooth and orderly transition from GSETT-3 to the envisaged IMS. As the technical elaborations on the international monitoring system are concluded in the CD, I will be fairly brief in introducing this extensive technical material.

GSETT-3 continues to be a successful experiment involving altogether 60 countries. A total of 43 primary and 90 auxiliary seismograph stations have participated in the experiment. The Group has taken steps towards the orderly transition from the GSETT-3 network to the proposed IMS seismic network by continuing its efforts to encourage countries having stations in the proposed IMS to join GSETT-3 and by removing from GSETT-3 some stations that are not part of the IMS. At present 32 of the primary stations participating in GSETT-3 and 38 of the auxiliary stations form part of the envisaged IMS.

During GSETT-3 the national data centres have played a most important role in the evaluation of GSETT-3 and in the operation and maintenance of stations and communication links as an interface to the experimental data centre. National contributions will be most useful also for the evaluation and calibration of the international monitoring system.

When it comes to experience from the experimental international data centre, GSETT-3 has demonstrated that a single IDC of the structure and size established for the experiment can successfully carry out the tasks envisaged under the IMS. Many of the functions envisaged for the IMS/IDC have already been implemented in the experimental IDC, and also data from non-seismic technologies proposed for the IMS are now gradually being integrated into the experimental IDC. Further improvements are, however, needed, especially in areas of redundancy and data security.

The seismological performance during GSETT-3 has shown steady improvement as the experiment has proceeded. Both the detection and location capabilities of the GSETT-3 networks are presently very heterogeneous. Network simulation has, however, shown that these capabilities will be more homogeneous when the IMS network is fully implemented. Tuning of the automatic detector systems for the primary stations and calibration of the seismic travel times to all network stations from the various regions of the globe will be required to achieve the detection and location capabilities expected for an operational IMS.

(Mr. Dahlman, Sweden)

The report also contains a number of recommendations on transition from the GSETT-3 to the IMS. The recommendations concern technical changes, improvements to seismological procedures and organizational provisions. I will bring forward a few of those recommendations to illustrate the kind of changes the Group sees as important.

As to the recommended technical changes, data authentication, data redundancy and data security are important areas for improvements. The further development of reliable and user-friendly IDC products is another important issue.

When it comes to recommended improvements to seismological procedures, the issue of network calibration is a most important one, and the Group discussed and revised a plan for network calibration to be included in the GSETT-3 documentation. In parallel with the calibration, improved methods are needed for calculating event locations and depths and for specifying the associated uncertainty. Other improvements concern in particular the development, testing and implementation of methods to calculate source characterization parameters.

Among the recommended organizational provisions, the development and implementation of a quality assurance plan and periodic external evaluation are two important issues. Development of complete and up-to-date operational and reference manuals and a plan for training of IMS personnel are two other important steps to be taken.

I have on many occasions stated that most of the work during GSETT-3 is carried out outside Geneva, at stations and national data centres and at the experimental IDC. The Ad Hoc Group expresses its appreciation to the staff at the experimental IDC in Arlington, United States, and at all national facilities around the world for their dedicated efforts which are essential in ensuring the success of GSETT-3. I would in this context also like to express my great appreciation to the Group's Scientific Secretary, Dr. Frode Ringdal, Norway, not only for his effort to bring together this report, but for the dedicated and most competent way he has served the GSE for 20 years.

The Group recommends that GSETT-3 should continue at least through 1996 or until the envisaged preparatory commission for the comprehensive nuclear-test-ban treaty organization assumes responsibility, including financing, for the work on establishing the IMS. This would allow the uninterrupted operation and development of the evolving IMS, including the experimental IDC, as well as continued evaluation and calibration. In this connection, the Ad Hoc Group is prepared to convene in 1997, should the Conference on Disarmament so request.

As this might be the last time I have the privilege of addressing the CD on behalf of the Ad Hoc Group, it might be useful to try to summarize some of the experiences gained from 20 years of expert work. I do this in the hope that it might prove useful if and when the CD enters other deliberations requiring expert support.

(Mr. Dahlman, Sweden)

The expert work conducted by the GSE has in several ways proved useful to the CTBT negotiations and will be useful in the possible implementation of the treaty. The design of the international monitoring system in CD/1427 is based on the concept developed and tested by the GSE. A substantial part of the seismic component of the IMS, including an experimental IDC, is in test operation. This infrastructure is flexible enough to also accommodate other envisaged IMS technologies. Extensive documentation has been established that could form a valuable basis for the operational manuals needed for the IMS. A number of people all over the world have gained knowledge and experience useful for their participation in the establishment and operation of the IMS.

A number of more general experiences, applicable to expert deliberations on other issues, might also be drawn from the work of the GSE.

The Group's work has been based on only two mandates - agreed in CCD/PV.714, dating from 1976, and CD/PV.48, dating from 1979. These broad- and long-term mandates have enabled the Group to conduct its work uninterrupted over many years. This has proved valuable as in-depth scientific and technical work takes a long time, especially if it includes system development and testing. The Group has also been able to establish its own method of work and internal organization, which we have adjusted over time to suit the actual tasks.

We have experienced that the design of a system in a political environment is quite different from normal system design, where clear requirements are given from the outset. While appreciating the difficulty of providing specific system requirements early on in a negotiation, it should be noted that political guidance is important to focus the technical work. Although our reports have always been received favourably, my experience is that the Group would have benefited greatly from more explicit feedback and guidance from the CD.

Real progress in the technical work can be expected only when there is a political will to achieve results. The Group experienced a long period of slow progress in the technical work when there was no realistic prospect of a CTBT. Nevertheless, the Group served an important purpose during those years by keeping a dialogue on test ban verification going and thus contributing to keeping the CTBT on the international agenda.

Only a small part of the expert work has been conducted at the Group's meetings in Geneva. The bulk of the work has been carried out at laboratories and data centres in participating countries. Active support from participating countries is a prerequisite for successful technical expert work. The level of expertise and experience was initially quite different among the countries participating in the Group's work. Over the years we have established close ties between experts from many countries and knowledge has been shared around the world. This may prove to be one of the most lasting effects of the GSE. Informal workshops and other national initiatives to bring scientists together on specific issues have been most essential in this regard. Within the framework of the expert work, a large number of modern

(Mr. Dahlman, Sweden)

facilities have been established which will not only prove useful in the implementation of the IMS but have also contributed to the technical and scientific infrastructure of individual countries.

The Group has made large efforts to obtain broad global participation in its work and has achieved some success. We have, however, not reached the geographical coverage that would have been desirable. Regional workshops, which proved most useful in this regard, were conducted only during the last year. This successful initiative should have been undertaken earlier.

During these 20 years we have been keeping a steady course as far as the basic system design is concerned and we have included modern technology as it has become available. This gradual development of the system has proved most useful. We have also become convinced that paper work is not enough. The large number of experiments we have carried out over the years, the most important being the ongoing GSETT-3, have provided experience and results that could not otherwise have been obtained. We have also learned the importance not only of carrying out tests in an orderly manner but also of thoroughly evaluating the experiments as they proceed. The way we have evaluated GSETT-3 and have been able to document our results and experiences is quite unique in the scientific world.

The Group has enjoyed excellent working conditions in the Palais and I would like to express our great appreciation for the most professional support we have received from all the personnel of the secretariat. We are truly impressed by the way over the years they have handled our sometimes most technical material. A special word of appreciation goes to the Group's present secretary, Ms. Mackby, and to her predecessor Mr. Cassandra, for their most valuable support and assistance.

I can assure you that the Group has greatly appreciated serving the CD all these years. We are proud of the confidence you have shown us and we have truly enjoyed carrying out the task entrusted to us. I hope that our results will soon be fully utilized in an operational monitoring system for a CTBT and I can assure you that we will do our best to ascertain that the results of our work, including the ongoing GSETT-3, will be transferred to the evolving IMS in a cost-effective way.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the Chairman of the Ad Hoc Group of Scientific Experts to Consider International Cooperative Measures to Detect and Identify Seismic Events for his statement. I am sure that delegations have taken note of this report, especially paragraph 14. I should like to express, on behalf of the Conference, our deep appreciation for the many years of hard work of the Expert Group under the leadership of Dr. Dahlman.

That concludes my list of speakers for today. Does any other delegation wish to take the floor?

The secretariat has circulated, at my request, a timetable of meetings for next week. This timetable was prepared in consultation with the Chairman

(The President)

of the Ad Hoc Committee on a Nuclear Test Ban and is, as usual, subject to change if necessary. On this understanding, may I take it that the Conference agrees to this timetable? Ambassador Zahran of Egypt has the floor.

Mr. ZAHRAN (Egypt) (translated from Arabic): In this timetable of meetings which has been distributed, we note that a meeting of the Ad Hoc Committee has been scheduled for Monday, 2 September at 3 o'clock in the afternoon. I believe that, following the approval of the report of that Committee, the Ad Hoc Committee's mandate has expired and if other work remains to be done then it would be outside that mandate. I am referring in particular to work on the headquarters agreement. Now if in that case the Friend of the Chair, Ambassador Ledogar, has a report to submit it seems to me that he could do that directly to the Conference at any of its meetings because I believe that the work of the Ad Hoc Committee was completed when its report was adopted.

Mr. KERVERS (Netherlands): Let me, in reaction to what was just stated by the distinguished Ambassador of Egypt, elaborate a bit for the information of delegations on the purpose of the meeting which the Chairman of the Ad Hoc Committee requested me to arrange for next Monday, 2 September, at 3 p.m. It is our recollection that there has not been a formal decision to wind up the Ad Hoc Committee, and the meeting for next Monday is a meeting which is intended to give an orderly finish to an outstanding issue.

As delegations will remember, at the beginning of August they agreed to a proposal by the Chairman of the Ad Hoc Committee, Ambassador Ramaker, to have his Friend of the Chair on host country commitments, aided by a team, conduct negotiations with the Austrian authorities on the host country agreements. At that session, Ambassador Ledogar was requested to continue such negotiations until 30 August and then report back to the Ad Hoc Committee. As 30 August is tomorrow, and as Ambassador Ramaker is away from Geneva during this week, he asked me to request, through you, the convening of an Ad Hoc Committee meeting next Monday, purely for the sake of winding up this unfinished business of the report of the Friend of the Chair on host country commitments in an orderly manner.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the distinguished representative of the Netherlands for his statement. May I assume that this meeting of the Ad Hoc Committee should take place after the explanation we have had?

It was so decided.

The PRESIDENT: The next plenary meeting of the Conference will be held on Tuesday, 3 September 1996 at 10 a.m., after which we will hold an informal plenary in order to start consideration of the draft annual report to the 51st General Assembly of the United Nations. This draft report is contained in document CD/WP.478, which is available in delegations' pigeon-holes.

The meeting rose at 10.55 a.m.